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CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
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JFK ACT RELEASE

—Associated Press

George de Mohrenschildt, shown with his wife in an earlier photo,

Figure in JFK Probe Found Dead, a 'Suicide'

From News Services

PALM BEACH, Fla. — A Russian-born petroleum geologist and language professor, described as "intimately involved" with Lee Harvey Oswald and a "crucial witness" in the new congressional investigation of the John F. Kennedy assassination, has been found dead in an apparent suicide.

Palm Beach County Sheriff Richard Wille identified the victim as George de Mohrenschildt, 65, a professor of French at Bishop College in Dallas.

Wille said de Mohrenschildt, a guest at the historic oceanfront mansion in suburban Manalapan, Fla., of Mrs. Charles Tilton III, apparently placed the muzzle of a 20 gauge shotgun to his mouth yesterday and pulled the trigger.

Authorities planned an autopsy today. Lt. Richard Sheets of the sheriff's office said there was "no reason to suspect anything other than suicide, but the investigation is continuing."

The sheriff said de Mohrenschildt had vanished from Dallas shortly after a Dutch newspaper report about three weeks ago claimed he had prior knowledge of the assassination.

De Mohrenschildt was traced by a House Assassinations Committee investigator to the Florida address, the sheriff said, and he returned to the Tilton home about 2:45 p.m. yesterday to learn that the investigator, believed to be Gaeton J. Fonzi, had been trying to reach him.

INFORMED LATE LAST night of the death, Rep. Richardson Preyer, D-N.C., a member of the committee, said, "He was a crucial witness for

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SHOOTING

Continued From A-1

us, based on the new information he had. He was intimately involved with Oswald."

When the Warren Commission issued its report in 1964, concluding that President Kennedy was killed by Oswald acting alone, it said it had conducted an extensive investigation into de Mohrenschildt and his wife, Jeanne, because they had known the Oswalds through mutual Russian-speaking friends in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. The commission concluded that there was no evidence linking them to the assassination.

In his account quoting de Mohrenschildt as saying he had prior knowledge of the Kennedy assassination, Dutch journalist William Oltmans reported, "He (de Mohrenschildt) asked me, 'How do you think the media would react if I came out and said I feel responsible for Oswald's behavior?'"

AFTER VANISHING from Dallas, de Mohrenschildt showed up in Oltmans' office in Holland. Then he disappeared again and was traced by government investigators from Brussels to Florida.

Wille said only a maid and the chauffeur were home at the time and the shooting went undiscovered until the body was found by de Mohrenschildt's daughter in a second floor drawing room. Both had been guests at the Tilton home for about a week.

The sheriff said the call to the home was believed to have been placed from Miami by House investigator Fonzi.

About an hour later, Wille said, de Mohrenschildt apparently shot himself. "We're 99 percent certain he killed himself," the sheriff said.

Wille and Palm Beach State Atty. David Bludworth questioned witnesses about the shooting until shortly before midnight.

Among the witnesses quizzed was free lance writer Edward Jay Epstein, author of "Inquest: The Warren Commission and the Establishment of Truth," who had told the West Palm Beach Post Monday night that he had been interviewing de Mohrenschildt in connection with a book he was doing about Lee Harvey Oswald.

Lt. Sheets said that just before de Mohrenschildt's death, he met with Epstein, whom he referred to as "an author on contract from Reader's Digest for an exclusive interview."

AFTER HIS questioning last night, Epstein said, "I don't mean to be evasive, but the police told me not to talk about de Mohrenschildt's death to anybody."

In his book Epstein laid out a thesis that problems of timing, questions about the Kennedy autopsy report and other matters suggest that more than one man shot at the President.

The Tilton home remained sealed off by sheriff's deputies last night.

According to the Warren Commission report, de Mohrenschildt was born in the Ukraine in 1911 and fled Russia in 1921 following the civil disorders that broke out after the Bolshevik revolution.

He became an American citizen in 1949, having earlier received a graduate degree from the University of Texas in petroleum geology and petroleum engineering.

In 1960, the report states, he traveled for eight months through Mexico and Panama over primitive jungle trails, and by happenstance he and his wife were in Guatemala City when the Bay of Pigs invasion was launched. He prepared a lengthy film clip and a complete written log on the trip and a report was made to the U.S. government, the commission reported.

De Mohrenschildt's death was the third involving witnesses or potential witnesses before congressional panels investigating assassinations.

Underworld figure Sam Giancana was murdered before testifying, and John Roselli was killed after appearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee investigating allegations that the assassination of Kennedy was in retaliation for CIA efforts to assassinate Cuban Premier Fidel Castro.

Associated Press

George de Mohrenschildt and his wife hold a picture of President and Mrs. Kennedy.

last interviews to newsmen.

He most certainly did not end his life because he was about to be questioned by a congressional committee. He most certainly did not know that Lee Harvey Oswald was going to kill Kennedy. What he failed to realize was that the difference between his rambling fantasies and those of Oswald's was the core of murderous anger that lay at the center of Oswald.

De Mohrenschildt's diagnosis of Oswald's situation was that Oswald seemed "too tense." He told Oswald, "You should take a drink once in a while and go out to a party."

But Oswald and history had it otherwise.

McMillan is the author of "The Making of an Assassin: The Life of James Earl Ray."

The Man Who Knew Oswald

By George McMillan

THAT "crucial witness" on the John F. Kennedy assassination who killed himself last week just before he was to be questioned by a House assassinations committee investigator did have something to say.

But what George de Mohrenschildt could have testified to was not "new" evidence at all and it had nothing whatsoever to do with a conspiracy.

In fact, he had already said what he had to say, and when his memory was fresh, in 1964 before the Warren Commission. He was one of the commission's key witnesses and its printed record includes 118 pages of testimony from de Mohrenschildt and almost an equal amount from his wife, in all nearly 300 pages.

But the truth about de Mohrenschildt is more fantastic than the wildest assassination conspiracy theory. It is one of the incredible ironies of history that the paths of de Mohrenschildt and Lee Harvey Oswald should have crossed, as they did, a few months before Oswald killed Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963.

In fact, de Mohrenschildt knew Oswald better than anyone else alive, except perhaps for Oswald's wife, Marina, from September, 1962, until April, 1963 — when de Mohrenschildt moved from Dallas.

It isn't at all difficult to believe that de Mohrenschildt had at one time or another worked for the CIA, and it is a matter of record that he was an agent for the French government in the United States during World War II when he was posing as a perfume salesman.

I can speak with some authority about de Mohrenschildt's life because he once asked me to write his life story and I spent many hours listening to him recount some of his bizarre, almost unbelievable episodes. I came across him when in 1964 I was working for a television network as a special investigator on what was to become an hour-long documentary on the John F. Kennedy assassination.

I was probably the first of many reporters who had "exclusive" interviews with de Mohrenschildt, and mine has a special flavor because I had to go to Haiti to find him.

I stayed with de Mohrenschildt and his wife in their lovely house which clutched the side of a steep hill overlooking Port-Au-Prince — and which was, not insignificantly, I suppose, within the compound where Papa Doc Duvalier then lived. We had to pass through heavily-guarded gates as we came and went.

I learned from him how he had eventually married three socially-prominent women, one of whom was a Philadelphia heiress. He told me how he had worked in U.S. missions in Yugoslavia, in Ghana, and how he has walked the length of Mexico with his fourth wife and two small dogs.

This woman, de Mohrenschildt's widow, was a White Russian who had been born the daughter of the director of the Chinese Far Eastern Railway, in Harbin, and who had danced in nightclubs in Shanghai and Tientsin under the name "Fomenko." Her career brought her eventually to New York's Rainbow Room.

De Mohrenschildt himself was born in 1911 in Mozyr, Byelorussia, the son of a land-poor nobleman whose family migrated to Poland in 1922. De Mohrenschildt got part of his higher education — he held two Ph.D.s — in Belgium, and eventually he came to the U.S. — in 1938.

The tragedy of his life was the death of his two children by the former Wynne Sharples, of Philadelphia. Both died of cystic fibrosis, and de Mohrenschildt was active in founding the National Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and succeeded in getting Jackie Kennedy to serve as honorary chairman when she was First Lady.

♦

HIS PROFESSIONAL training was as a petroleum engineer, and he went to Dallas in the early 1950s to search out and exploit oil leases.

He did not do well in Dallas, and, although he was a member of the influential Petroleum Club, he made his social life in the city's Russian emigre colony, some of whose members tried to help Lee and Marina Oswald when they moved to Dallas in 1962. It was then and through this world that de Mohrenschildt and his wife met the Oswalds.

De Mohrenschildt talked many times with an Oswald who had not talked that much to anybody else. They talked mostly about politics. They agreed on most things — they both hated the John Birch Society which was active in Dallas at that time, they both hated the FBI and they both admired John F. Kennedy and Castro.

It was the accidental conjunction of their lives, and not the fact that George was an acute observer, that made him a valuable witness for the Warren Commission. Under thorough questioning, George was able to recreate the life of the Oswalds at a critical juncture in their history and to reveal the political content of Lee Harvey Oswald's mind as it was a few months before Oswald killed Kennedy.

At the commission's request, he reconstructed each of his meetings with Oswald. At the end of his lengthy interrogation, de Mohrenschildt was asked to make an appraisal of Oswald. He was condescending and said he didn't think that Oswald was very intelligent.

De Mohrenschildt was too self-centered, too arrogant, to be sensitive to the feelings of others, and I did not find him to be the kind of person who could give any insight into why Oswald killed Kennedy. It seems apparent that Oswald had not decided to do so at the time de Mohrenschildt moved to Haiti.

That is why it seems unlikely that de Mohrenschildt had anything more to tell anybody — especially in March, 1977, 14 years after the event, 14 disastrous years in de Mohrenschildt's personal life. His last job was as a teacher in a small college and that ended when he simply stopped turning up for work. For months before he took his life, he had talked about committing suicide to his friends who were still members of that Russian emigre group in Dalls. They took him to dinner, tried to stimulate his interest in life again. They failed and he was admitted for three months to the Parkland Hospital psychiatric unit in 1976.

Some of the reports on de Mohrenschildt's death said he "felt guilty." He may have done so in the last stages of his life, but for years after the Kennedy assassination he did not show any signs of remorse. It was his wife who had him committed to Parkland Hospital and she did so because he had begun to think he was being followed. The question is whether de Mohrenschildt was responsible in February and March of this year when he gave his

Assassination Link Denied

4 APR 1977

Post

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla.—George de Mohrenschildt, who committed suicide Tuesday, was "mentally and physically afraid" of Dutch journalist Willem Oltmans but did not fear the possibility of testifying before the House Assassinations Committee on the 1963 death of President Kennedy, his only daughter said.

"It's completely contrary to anything I ever heard my father say," Alexandra de Mohrenschildt, 33, said of Oltmans' statements. "That my father had anything to do with the assassination of President Kennedy, that my father had anything to do with masterminding the assassination, is completely contrary to anything he said to me. Nothing remotely like that."

"He was just terrified" of Oltmans, however, she said, "and he was afraid that Mr. Oltmans was trying to make him do and say things he had never done."

She could offer no explanation of why her father took his own life, but said he was mentally ill.

Assassin Probe's 'Preview' Provides Little New Light

3.477

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

If the latest official report of the House Assassinations Committee could be labeled neatly, "Twice Told Tales" might do.

In preparation for last week's showdown vote continuing the congressional inquiry into the murders of President Kennedy and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., the besieged 12-member committee decided to offer a public preview of its investigations thus far.

Most of the material in the 14-page status report was uncorroborated and had a vaguely familiar ring.

The report raises serious questions about both the accuracy of the committee's work and its inclination to present twice-told tales as though they were fresh leads too sensitive to disclose with any particularity.

After announcing that the 67-member staff is assiduously pursuing "new leads" in the Kennedy assassination, for instance, the report confides:

"Recently, an FBI informant advised the Committee that he had seen an FBI agent and Lee Harvey Oswald meeting together on numerous occasions in various New Orleans bars. The informant states that he had previously denied seeing Oswald and the agent together because he was threatened by the agent. The agent has denied the informant's charge."

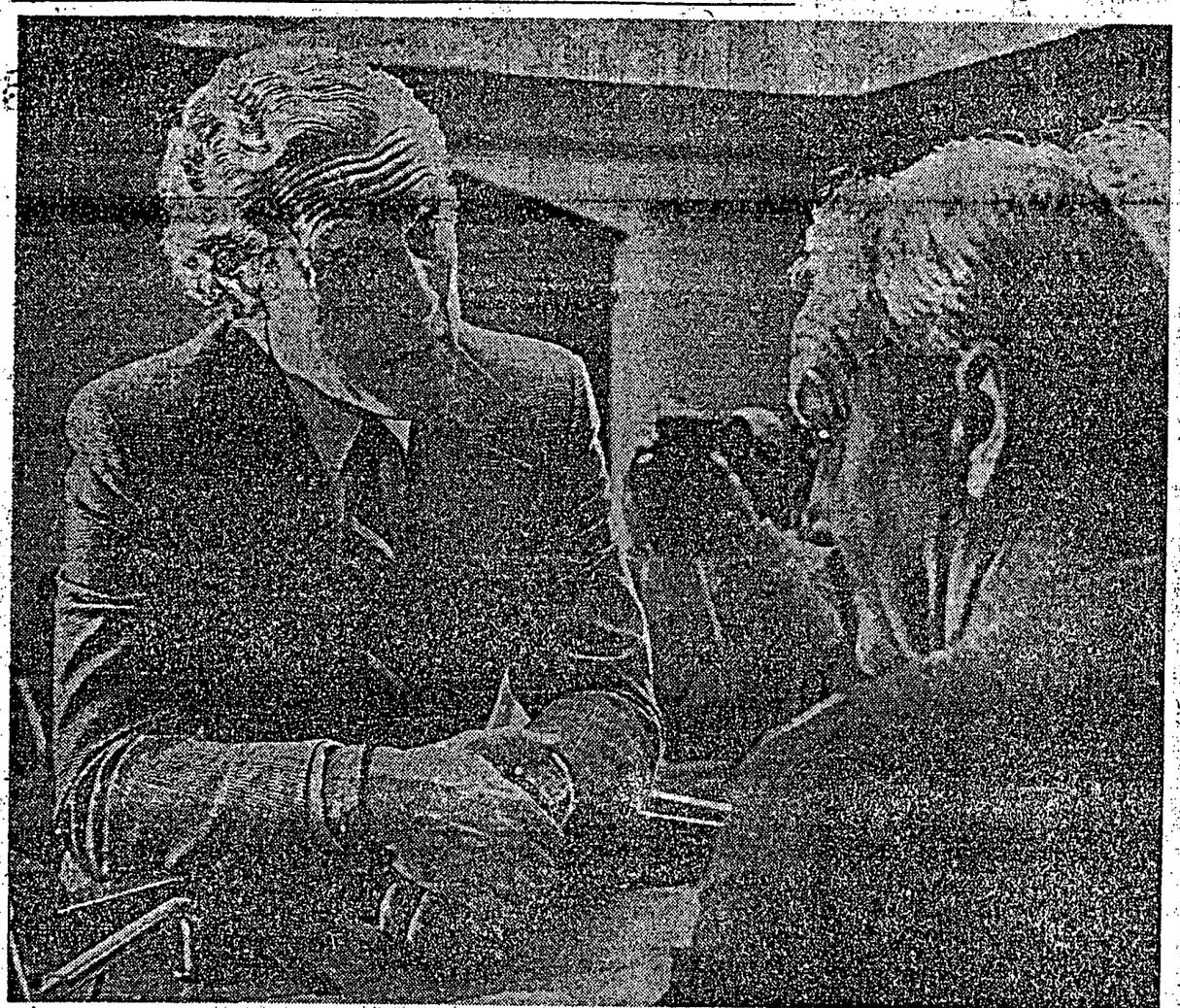
In this case, the committee appears to be just getting around to what millions of Americans saw and heard on Nov. 26, 1975, on a CBS-TV program entitled "The American Assassins."

News Analysis

While the cameras rolled, New Orleans bar operator Orest Pena openly asserted, and FBI Agent Warren DeBrueys openly denied, that DeBrueys and Oswald often met in the city's French Quarter, especially at a Greek restaurant.

Pena's story had changed quite a bit

See INQUIRY, A9, Col. 1



By James K.W. Atherton—The Washington Post

Dutch journalist Willem Oltmans, left, confers with Rep. Preyer before House Assassinations panel closed session.

Journalist Relates Man's Claim Of Role in JFK Assassination

Associated Press

A Dutch journalist said he testified under oath yesterday that a Russian emigrant who apparently committed suicide earlier this week had claimed to be part of a conspiracy to kill President Kennedy.

The television newsman, Willem Oltmans, said George de Mohrenschildt told him the alleged conspiracy involved Texas oilmen, Cuban exiles, and CIA and FBI agents.

Oltmans said de Mohrenschildt claimed he was a middleman between H. L. Hunt representing Texas oilmen and Lee Harvey Oswald. The journalist said he gave the committee "the name of an FBI official, not (J. Edgar) Hoover, who might be important."

The Warren Commission, which investigated Kennedy's 1963 assassination in Dallas, later said Oswald was the lone assassin. De Mohrenschildt was questioned at length for the Warren Commission report, but did not mention any of the incidents Oltmans spoke of yesterday.

The Dutch journalist said de Mohrenschildt told him Cubans had fired at Kennedy the same time Oswald did, and said he gave the House Assassinations Committee the name and picture of one Cuban he believes was involved.

Oltmans, who testified for more than three hours in a closed session of the House panel investigating the Kennedy assassination, later declined to tell reporters what evidence he had to support that claim.

He said he gave the committee a taped interview in which a Cuban exile named Loran Hall claims he was offered $50,000 in the office of oilman Lester Logue to kill Kennedy.

In Dallas, Logue called that allegation "ridiculous" and said he would meet with his lawyers to discuss suing Oltmans for libel.

After Oltmans testified, reporters asked subcommittee Chairman Richardson Preyer (D-N.C.) if he believed the story.

"Ask me that question in a few months," Preyer replied. "Mr. Oltmans was very specific on some things which can be corroborated but not as clear on others."

De Mohrenschildt, who was hospitalized last fall in Dallas for mental illness, apparently shot himself to death in Palm Beach, Fla., on Tuesday, according to officials, just hours after a committee investigator tried to contact him.

The journalist said in at least two news interviews prior to his committee appearance that de Mohrenschildt wavered between insisting the whole story was true and indicating he made it up to sell a book.

But Oltmans who is said to be writing a book on the assassination himself, told reporters after his testimony that de Mohrenschildt never told him he had made the story up.

Oltmans said de Mohrenschildt mixed socially with Dallas oilmen and other wealthy people and became a friend of Hunt, a multimillionaire oilman now dead.

"What Mr. de Mohrenschildt said was that Mr. Oswald was acting at his guidance and his instructions," Oltmans said in an ABC interview. "Mr. de Mohrenschildt indicated to me very strongly that his ties upwards were towards H. L. Hunt ... and downstairs to Lee Harvey Oswald."

In Dallas a spokesman for the Hunt family called de Mohrenschildt's claims "the product of a distorted imagination."

De Mohrenschildt was born in the Soviet Union and was a member of Dallas' Russian community. He taught French at Bishop College there. He knew Oswald before the assassination and said he and his wife befriended Oswald because Marina Oswald was

INQUIRY, From A1

from his Warren Commission testimony that he had seen Oswald in the company of a Latin-looking man in August of 1963 at Pena's own Habana Bar and Lounge, where Oswald distinguished himself first by ordering lemonade and later by getting sick.

Pena's CBS appearance is dismissed with a vulgarity by Harold Weisberg, who has written a series of books on the Kennedy and King assassinations and who has become an outspoken critic of the House inquiry.

"Orest's an old friend of mine," Weisberg adds. "Everybody keeps asking him crazy questions leading to a whole set of confabulations. But I don't think he thinks he's making anything up. He's just lost in all of this. God knows who's been telling him what."

Item—According to the House report, "a witness who was an FBI security code clerk in the New Orleans office from 1961-'66 alleges that the FBI sent a teletype to all of its offices five days before the assassination, warning of a reported conspiracy to assassinate President Kennedy on his proposed trip to Dallas on November 22-23 (1963) . . . The FBI has denied sending such a teletype."

This story originally popped to public attention on another television program back in 1968 featuring Jim Garrison, then the district attorney of New Orleans. According to an Oct. 21, 1975, hearing before the House Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights, moreover, the code clerk, William Walter, had not only added new twists to the story over the years, but also did poorly on a polygraph test provided under the auspices of the Dallas Times Herald in 1975 when the story surfaced again. (In the words of an FBI official, "there were indications of deception on the part of Mr. Walter" but "the results were inconclusive because of the limited number of questions . . . ")

Item—The committee is "intensively" investigating an alleged conspiracy against King stemming "from a report by a now-deceased undercover informant of a southern police department. Immediately prior to Dr. King's death," the report states, "he told his superiors that he had recently overheard a conversation between members of two organizations in which it was said that when Dr. King returned to Memphis they would be forced to kill him."

The fact is that the informant, the late Willie Somersett, did not tell his superiors (Miami police and Dade County prosecuting authorities) about the purported conversation until nearly three weeks after King was killed.

Somersett did voice vague apprehensions about King before the murder to Miami Police Lt. Charles Sapp, as readers of last October's issue of Miami Magazine have known for months. But Somersett's "control" officer, former prosecutor Seymour Gelber, now a Dade County Circuit Court judge, told The Washington Post in a telephone interview that he has strong reservations about Somersett's report because "the story was not given to us until after King's death. I think that makes it a lot different."

Item—Solemnly stating that its investigation has "uncovered other areas of possible assistance" to James Earl Ray (now serving a 99-year prison term for King's murder), the committee declares: "According to bank records, Ray's safety deposit box in Birmingham was closed by someone living in Baton Rouge. At the time of the closing, however, Ray was living in Los Angeles."

Weisberg, who has done investigative work for Ray and spoken with him, charges that "what they say here is false.

"The bank deposit bax was closed by a letter from Ray postmarked Baton Rouge. The bank closed the box and threw the letter away. I think he wrote the letter in Los Angeles and mailed it in Baton Rouge on his way to New Orleans."

None of this should be taken to mean that there are not many questions to be answered if the House inquiry is to be conducted. But as George McMillan, author of a book about Ray called "The Making of an Assassin," puts it:

"I really don't think they should take things that have been cleared up and talk about them so provocatively when they should know better."

The itemization is far from complete. In one especially questionable sentence, the committee has an FBI ballistics expert *testifying* at Ray's guilty plea hearing (he didn't) about whether the fatal bullet (he said in an affidavit it was too distorted) came from the rifle "allegedly" purchased by Ray.

Declares James Lesar, Ray's erstwhile attorney who says he still represents him: "Of all the things that are not in dispute, it is that Ray pur-

chased the rifle . . . They don't know the facts [of either assassination] yet. So they're not even in a position to judge the credibility of the people who come to them."

In still another dubious excursion, the committee has now labeled a man who not long ago emerged from a psychiatric ward, George de Mohrenschildt, as a "crucial witness" although he had just committed suicide. Neither the Assassinations Committee nor its staff ever interviewed the man, a White Russian who had befriended the Oswalds in Texas in 1962.

In fact, House investigators possess little more than a Dutch television film tape and one tape cassette "allegedly" containing a conversation between de Mohrenschildt and Dutch journalist Willem Oltmans.

In a spate of interviews since de Mohrenschildt's death Tuesday afternoon, Oltmans has been quoting him as saying he was a middleman between Texas oilmen and Oswald in a baroque "Kill-Kennedy conspiracy" which also seems to have included anti-Castro Cubans and a trucking firm executive.

Curiously, by Oltmans' account, de Mohrenschildt did not come up with the story until February—more than 13 years after the assassination but only a few weeks after his release Dec. 30 from the psychiatric unit of Parkland Memorial Hospital. And although Oltmans quoted de Mohrenschildt as saying Oswald took instructions from him, that is somewhat difficult to square with the fact that the de Mohrenschildts were in Haiti at the time of the Kennedy assassination and had been there for about five months. They told the Warren Commission they last saw the Oswalds in April of 1963 and, the commission found, "they never saw either of the Oswalds again."

Charges Weisberg: "There's not one thing they've come up with that has established relevance. They've been in business six months, they've had a staff of 73 people, and they can't even read accurately from other people's work. I have never seen a more total confession of bankruptcy."

However that may be, the committee is clearly following the "scenario" laid out at a secret March 17 meeting when its since-resigned chief counsel, Richard A. Sprague, warned the members that the potentially-significant items compiled thus far were much "too raw and uncorroborated for us to be stating publicly."

Rep. Samuel L. Devine (R-Ohio) responded by suggesting that the committee might take some of the "literally hundreds of undeveloped leads" on hand and make them public in bowdlerized fashion.

That way, Devine suggested, the committee could "let people know that, 'My God, they are onto something that is new stuff' . . ."

According to one well-placed source, with Sprague gone the pressures to find a conspiracy are bound to increase. This source says Sprague, as an investigator, was actually "a moderating influence."

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Dutch Journalist's Theory: Wide

But Can Willem Oltmans' Bombshells Be Believed?

By Jeremiah O'leary
Washington Star Staff Writer

Dutch journalist Willem Oltmans has presented the House Assassinations Committee with enough bombshells alleging conspiracies against the life of President John F. Kennedy to keep the panel occupied for the rest of the year.

Unfortunately, for the committee and for public credibility, the persons mentioned by Oltmans are either dead or deny the allegation or are not immediately accessible to be asked about the sworn testimony of the witness.

OLTMANS TESTIFIED for three hours before the panel's Kennedy subcommittee yesterday behind closed doors.

The essence of Oltmans' story is that he had been told of a conspiracy to assassinate Kennedy involving Lee Harvey Oswald, the FBI, the CIA, some Texas oilmen, Jack Ruby, a group of anti-Castro Cubans and a Russian-born Dallas professor named George de Mohrenschildt. Oltmans' primary known source was de Mohrenschildt, who committed suicide last Tuesday in Florida and who earlier had disappeared in Brussels on March 7 while negotiating the sale of a book he has written about the alleged conspiracy.

The manuscript of de Mohrenschildt's book, entitled "I'm a Patsy. I'm a Patsy," is in the possession of his Dallas lawyer, Pat S. Russell. It purports to tell the whole story of the conspiracy and, according to Oltmans, describes how de Mohrenschildt considered himself responsible for Oswald's actions. Russell has not returned newsmen's calls but it is understood he has confirmed to investigators that he has the de Mohrenschildt manuscript.

U.S. SOURCES said Russell intends to hold on to the de Mohrenschildt papers. Behind the scenes, officials are awaiting a decision on whether the House committee will obtain the documents by subpoena or whether the FBI will seek access to them by court order.

Rep. Hal Sawyer, R-Mich, said he was outraged by the nature of the Oltmans testimony before the subcommittee headed by Rep. Richardson Preyer, D-N.C. "This is hearsay, twice removed," he said vehemently.

Other members of Congress implied that the value of the Oltmans testimony was in doubt since four of the alleged conspirators are dead: de Mohrenschildt, oil millionaire H.L. Hunt, Oswald and Ruby. But Oltmans told newsmen after the hearing yesterday that the committee asked him for, and will get, all the letters he received from de Mohrenschildt over the past 11 years.

"De Mohrenschildt told me that Oswald acted at his (de Mohrenschildt's) instructions and that he knew Oswald was going to kill Kennedy," Oltmans said.

OLTMANS ALSO told the committee:

- That Oswald and the late H. L. Hunt were "very close."
- That a Texas geological engineer named Loren Hall claimed he was offered $50,000 in the office of a Dallas attorney named Lester Logue for the assassination of Kennedy.
- That de Mohrenschildt told him he had discussed the assassination of Kennedy with Oswald "from A to Z."

Oltmans said he gave the committee the name and picture of a Cuban veteran of the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba who was part of the conspiracy. The motivation of the Cuban exile conspirators for killing Kennedy, according to Oltmans, was their conviction that the President had betrayed them at the Bay of Pigs.

In Dallas the Associated Press quoted Logue, a self-styled conservative Republican, as calling Oltmans a "publicity psychopath" and saying the charge involving him is "ridiculous." Logue said he intended to meet with his lawyers to discuss suing Oltmans for libel.

IN DENVER, a spokesman for the Hunt family, Claude Fleet, said, "Oltmans' statements will be recognized by most people for what they

See PROBE, A-6

Conspiracy in JFK's Murder

Was He Responsible for Oswald's Act?

The de Mohrenschildt-JFK Enigma

By Jeremiah O'Leary
Washington Star Staff Writer

When George de Mohrenschildt disappeared in Brussels last March 7, he could have been tabbed either as just another fruitcake or as someone out to make a buck on his acquaintance with Lee and Marina Oswald.

Or, just possibly, he could have been the man responsible for Oswald's behavior when President John F. Kennedy was shot to death in 1963 as he reportedly acknowledged in the manuscript of a book he had written.

But today, this much is certain about the 65-year-old Russian-born emigre:

- He is now in a Palm Beach, Fla., morgue, dead of an apparently self-inflicted shotgun wound.
- He was of sufficient interest to the House Committee on Assassinations that one of its investigators was in Palm Beach on Tuesday seeking to interview him when the ostensible suicide occurred.
- He is once again of considerable interest to the FBI. A major portion of Book 9 of the Warren Commission Report concerns de Mohrenschildt.

The reason de Mohrenschildt may have committed suicide in his daughter's house is not known. Nor is it known why he was negotiating with Dutch publishers to sell his book when he disappeared in the Belgian capital shortly after meeting a Soviet diplomat.

He has been described as an opportunist and a man with a history of mental illness who was subject to wild changes of mood.

But both the House investigative panel and the FBI seek to find out what role, if any, de Mohrenschildt played in the Kennedy assassination.

DE MOHRENSCHILDT, as part of the Dallas Russian-speaking community, was close to Oswald and his Russian-born wife, Marina. The FBI says it checked him out after the presidential assassination. He was a witness before the Warren Commission, and what he said then can be found in 118 pages of that bulky report.

What is not known is what his motive was for writing the manuscript of a book entitled "I'm a Patsy, I'm a Patsy" and claiming that it is the story of how he was responsible for Oswald's assassination of Kennedy.

Some details of the last months of de Mohrenschildt's life were provided to The Washington Star in an interview with Dutch journalist Willem Oltmans.

Oltmans had cultivated de Mohrenschildt as a news source and as a friend for the past 10 years. He told the House Assassinations Committee earlier this month about de Mohrenschildt's decision to tell his version of the Kennedy murder.

Oltmans version prompted the panel to send investigator Gaetan Fonzi to Palm Beach last Monday to question de Mohrenschildt. According to Oltmans:

Oltmans had known de Mohrenschildt for a decade. He knew de Mohrenschildt to be an emigre Russian count, a petroleum engineer, a teacher of French at Bishop College and a close friend of the Oswalds. Oltmans fell into the habit of visiting George and Jeanne de Mohrenschildt in Dallas two or three times a year.

IN JANUARY 1976 de Mohrenschildt wrote Oltmans that he was preparing a book and sent several pages to the Dutch reporter. By June the book was completed, but Jeanne de Mohrenschildt told Oltmans she was upset when she read it. She told her husband he would go to jail if it was published because it was about the assassination of Kennedy and mentioned names of CIA and FBI agents throughout.

Last November, Oltmans went to Dallas and called de Mohrenschildt, only to be told by his wife that he had been in a hospital for several months. Oltmans said he called de Mohrenschildt's lawyer, Pat S. Russell, and was told de Mohrenschildt was in a mental hospital suffering from a persecution complex and undergoing shock treatments.

According to Oltmans, Russell has the manuscript in his office files.

Oltmans went back to Dallas on Feb. 23, 1977, and had lunch with de Mohrenschildt, who was back at work. The journalist said this exchange took place in the Bishop College library:

De Mohrenschildt: "How would it hit the media if I came out and said I felt responsible for Oswald's behavior?"

Oltmans: "You mean what Oswald did? Shot or not shot, he was involved in the shooting. You have links here to the shooting of the president of the United States."

De Mohrenschildt: "I realize that and I don't want to incriminate myself directly. But I am convinced that what Oswald finally set up we completely agreed upon."

Oltmans: "But you were in Haiti on the day of the assassination."

De Mohrenschildt: "Yes."

Oltmans said de Mohrenschildt "was a guy very cleverly saying 'I knew exactly what Oswald was going to do and I have proof of it.' "

OLTMANS said he asked de Mohrenschildt if he was ready to make a statement. He said the professor replied: "Yes, but never in America. I am being followed. I find my house all the time searched. So I am scared to death. I first must get out of the country."

Oltmans said he quickly called his Dutch television superior and was told to bring de Mohrenschildt to Holland. As Oltmans tells it, de Mohrenschildt had several changes of mind but finally said he was ready to go. Oltmans said they drove to Houston, left de Mohrenschildt's car there with a man named David Russell and eventually arrived in Amsterdam on March 3. There they began a round of talks with Dutch television and publishing executives, meanwhile checking with attorney Russell in Dallas to be sure the manuscript was still in his office.

On March 5 Oltmans and de Mohrenschildt drove to Brussels to meet a friend of the Dutch reporter, a Soviet diplomat he identified only as "Kuznetzov." The three men chatted at the newstand of the Hotel Metropole and de Mohrenschildt said he would go for a walk before lunch. "He never returned from that walk," said Oltmans.

On March 7, de Mohrenschildt's disappearance was reported to the U.S. Embassy in the Hague. Oltmans said the official receiving the report was Jacob Gillespie, a press officer at the embassy. There is no record that the missing report was relayed to the State Department in Washington.

Oltmans said he wasn't worried. He got a call from a man in Brussels who identified himself as "Genta" and said de Mohrenschildt had departed for the United States. But Olt-

mans said de Mohrenschildt left behind all his belongings except his briefcase. Oltmans said he put de Mohrenschildt's possessions in an Amsterdam bank and sent the receipt to attorney Russell in Dallas.

Yesterday in Palm Beach, Fla., a police official said authorities were holding "certain personal papers" belonging to de Mohrenschildt, United Press International reported. The official declined to say whether those papers were related to the Kennedy assassination.

In early March, Oltmans told his story to the House panel's deputy counsel Robert Tanenbaum and three other investigators in Washington. Oltmans' view of de Mohrenschildt's role in the assassination is that de Mohrenschildt didn't figure in the slaying but "that together they cooked it up."

De Mohrenschildt, according to Oltmans, could have been kidnaped, or have had another "crazy attack" or have gone to the Soviet Union. None of those things happened, but Oltmans did have a clue to the way de Mohrenschildt died even before the man shot himself.

Oltmans said "He told me in Europe: 'Look, I'll be discharged at Bishop College in June. I'm 65. My wife ran away. (They reportedly are now divorced.) I'm at the end of the line.' And one day he came into my room and said, 'Let's face it. I only made up the story (about Oswald) because everybody makes a million dollars off the Kennedy assassination, and I haven't made anything. So now it's my time. So now you and I know that.'"

THE FBI SAYS IT does not know what to make of de Mohrenschildt's strange journey or of his apparent suicide. The Warren Commission concluded that he did not have any connection with Kennedy's death even though he knew the Oswalds well and probably helped them with financial and family problems.

House investigator Fonzi went to the house where de Mohrenschildt was staying at noon Tuesday and was told to return that evening because the man was not home. In the afternoon, de Mohrenschildt apparently put a shotgun in his mouth and pulled the trigger.

No note was found. If there is an answer to George de Mohrenschildt's troubled life, it may lie in the book he has written and that lawyer Russell purportedly has filed away in Dallas: "I'm a Patsy, I'm a Patsy."

MARCH 31, 1977

Professor, 65, Who Killed Himself May Have Been Oswald Confidant

PALM BEACH, Fla., March 30 (UPI)—A Russian-born professor who committed suicide, apparently when he learned that a House investigating committee wanted his testimony concerning President Kennedy's assassination, may once have been an operative for the Central Intelligence Agency, and a confidant of Lee Harvey Oswald, sources familiar with the case said today.

The body of George de Mohrenschildt, 65 years old, was found yesterday in a second-floor study of a Palm Beach waterfront mansion by his daughter, Alexandra, 33, who had just returned from a shopping trip.

His death came shortly after he learned that an investigator for the House assassinations committee was seeking him to testify before the committee about his connections with Mr. Oswald, Mr. Kennedy's assassin.

The timing of Mr. de Mohrenschmidt's death immediately became a factor in the House committee's request to extend its investigations of political assassinations. Representative Richardson Preyer, Democrat of North Carolina, said the committee had linked Mr. de Mohrenschildt to "new evidence" that indicated "de Mohrenschildt may have been closer to Lee Harvey Oswald than appeared on the surface."

Called C.I.A. Agent

A source who investigated the Kennedy assassination for three years asserted that Mr. de Mohrenschildt, who held degrees in international commerce, petroleum geology and engineering, was serving as a C.I.A. agent in Haiti in 1963, the year that Mr. Kennedy was killed in Dallas.

Mr. de Mohrenschildt denied in published testimony before the Federal commission that investigated the Kennedy death that he had never been an agent of any government. he said his wide travels on several continents were solely business-connected. However, the commission, headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, also took off-the-record testimony from him that has never been made public.

Mr. de Mohrenschildt talked last month in Dallas with a Dutch journalist, Wilhelm Oltmans, who told the House Assassination committee that in advance that Oswald was going to do.

"According to the Warren Commission report, published in October 1964, Mr. de Mohrenschildt and his wife met Oswald and his wife Marina in dallas in 1962.

Mr. Preyer said Mr. de Mohrenschildt "was a crucial witness for us, based on the new information he had." "He was intimately involved with Oswald," he added.

Convinced of Suicide

The Palm Beach County sheriff's office withheld an official ruling on Mr. de Mohrenschildt's death until results of an autopsy and further investigation wre made public. But Lieut. Richard Sheets said there was "no reason to suspect anything other than suicide."

Mr. de Mohrenschildt, who was a French-language teacher at Bishop College in Dallas at the time of his death, arrived from Brussels a week ago with his daughter to visit Mrs. Charles Tilton 3d.

Mrs. Tilton owns the three-story home on an estate alongside the Intracoastal Waterway, seven miles south of Palm Beach. Mrs. Hilton is the former Nancy Pierson Sands.

Sheriff Richard Wille said that Gaeton J. Fonzi, an investigator for the House assassinations committee, went to the Hilton estate about noon yesterday and left word that he would return at 8:30 P.M. to see Mr. de Mohrenschildt. The sheriff said no suicide note had been found.

30 MAR 1977

Figure in JFK Assassination Probe Dies in Florida, an Apparent Suicide

PALM BEACH, Fla., March 29 (AP) A witness reportedly sought by the House Assassinations Committee in its investigation of President Kennedy's assassination was found dead today of what police said appeared to be a self-inflicted shotgun wound in the head.

The victim, George de Mohrenschildt of Dallas, Tex., a geologist who taught French at Bishop College, reportedly had been an acquaintance of Lee Harvey Oswald and his wife Marina.

Palm Beach County Sheriff's Lt. Richard Sheets said there was "no reason to suspect anything other than suicide but the investigation is continuing." But he said no formal ruling will be made until after an autopsy Wednesday.

The body of de Mohrenschildt, 65, was found by his daughter Alexandra, 33, in the guest room of a palatial oceanside home here. He and his daughter had arived there from where they were visiting relatives, Sheets said.

"At the time of the shooting, he was alone in the house except for two maids who said they did not hear the shot," Sheets said. No suicide note was found.

Willem Oltmans, a Dutch journalist who has been interviewed by assassination committee investigators has said publicly that the Russian-born de Mohrenschildt told him in an interview he felt some responsibility for Kennedy's slayings.

An assassination panel source said its investigators had only recently located de Mohrenschildt in Florida.

PROBE

Continued From A-1

are, an effort on his part to gain some personal attention and notoriety by using names of persons no longer living or able to speak for or defend themselves." He said Hunt's sons, Herbert and Bunker, had no knowledge of their father ever meeting de Mohrenschildt.

Another Hunt family spokesman, James C. Oberwetter, said "since it has been reported de Mohrenschildt had a history of mental problems, if in fact de Mohrenschildt ever claimed to have had any relationship with H. L. Hunt, those claims must be viewed accordingly."

The Star has confirmed that de Mohrenschildt attempted suicide four times last year in Dallas, using drugs and by cutting his wrists, and was in fact a hospitalized mental patient just before he and Oltmans got together in Dallas more than a month ago. It was there, Oltmans said, that de Mohrenschildt said he was ready to tell his story, but only outside the United States.

Oltmans and de Mohrenschildt then went to Holland to talk to Dutch publishers about the book but de Mohrenschildt abruptly departed and was not heard of again until his death Tuesday in Palm Beach.

After Oltmans testified, Preyer was asked if he believed the conspiracy story unfolded by Oltmans. "Ask me that question again in a few months," said Preyer. "Mr. Oltmans was very specific on some things which can be corroborated but not as clear on others."

AS NEWSMEN put together Oltmans' various accounts, his story seems to be that de Mohrenschildt was the middle man between the conspirators and Oswald. The Dutch journalist, who variously describes himself as working for Dutch national television and as a freelancer, says Oswald and an unknown number of Cubans fired at Kennedy at the same time.

If Oltmans has any proof of the conspiracy he says revolved around de Mohrenschild, he did not offer it to newsmen who waited to talk to him after his testimony. Oltmans was interviewed last month by committee investigators when de Mohrenschildt was still considered a missing person.

He also did not name the CIA and FBI personnel allegedly involved in the plot to kill Kennedy.

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WASHINGTON STAR (GREEN LINE)
1 APRIL 1977

Dutch Journalist to Testify On Role of Oswald Friend

By Jeremiah O'Leary
Washington Star Staff Writer

More details of the late George de Mohrenschildt's connection with Lee Harvey Oswald and the murder of President John F. Kennedy will be given to the House Assassinations Committee today by a witness close to the Russian-born Dallas professor.

Willem Oltmans, a Dutch journalist who had cultivated de Mohrenschildt for a decade after the death of Kennedy, is scheduled to make a second appearance before committee probers today. He was interviewed here last month by the Kennedy task force of the committee after de Mohrenschildt disappeared in Brussels while the two were in Europe attempting to arrange publication of a book written about the Kennedy case by the 65-year-old teacher.

De Mohrenschildt committed suicide Tuesday in Palm Beach, Fla., while House investigators were trying to contact him for questioning on what he knew about Oswald and the 1963 slaying of Kennedy.

Oltmans told The Washington Star he can now give the committee new details of what de Mohrenschildt told him about his connection with Oswald and Oswald's Russian wife Marina. The Oswalds and de Mohrenschildt were friends in the Russian-speaking community of Dallas, but the Warren Commission had concluded de Mohrenschildt had no connection with Kennedy's death.

THE MANUSCRIPT of de Mohrenschildt's book, reportedly in the custody of de Mohnrenschildt's Dallas lawyer, Pat S. Russell, is said to name CIA and FBI agents involved in the assassination and to spell out de Mohrenschildt's claim that he was responsible for Oswald's behavior.

In the meantime, it was learned today from reliable sources that de Mohrenschildt tried to commit suicide four times in 1976 both with drug overdoses and by slashing his wrists. These attempts resulted in his being committed for mental care to Parkland Hospital in Dallas last fall. It was at Parkland that Kennedy was pronounced dead after he was shot in a Dallas motorcade more than 13 years ago. Shot by nightclub owner Jack Ruby in the Dallas police headquarters building, Oswald died there two days after Kennedy.

Meanwhile, Chairman Louis Stokes of the House Assassinations Committee has taken personal charge of the 65-person staff during what he says is a period of reorganization after the traumatic internal struggles that nearly destroyed the panel.

Stokes, D-Ohio, yesterday spent two hours at staff headquarters in the dingy former FBI fingerprint building, first addressing the committee employes and then touring their working area.

THE MEETING WAS closed to the press, but reporters heard Stokes receive several ovations in the 30-minute period. Later, Stokes said he told the staff, now stripped of its guiding spirit, former Chief Counsel Richard A. Sprague, how proud he was of them and that he hoped all of them would remain on the job during the reorganization period.

Stokes said the committee is now looking for a new chief counsel of top caliber and he added, "We'll look for the best." He did not rule out the possibility of considering the present deputy counsels, Richard Lehner and Richard Tanenbaum, for the top spot, but indicated the panel would take its time determining who the new staff director will be.

In another development, The Associated Press reported the committee's JFK task force is pursuing two leads that may shed new light on the murder of Kennedy. One of these leads reportedly is that there may be too many bullet fragments for Lee Harvey Oswald to have killed Kennedy by himself.

The other lead, reported to the committee by investigators in a closed-door briefing, is that a woman who worked in a Dallas nightclub is willing to testify that Jack Ruby introduced Oswald to her as "Lee Harvey Oswald of the CIA."

The Warren Commission report concluded that Oswald fired three bullets at Kennedy from a window of the Texas Schoolbook Depository and that Ruby and Oswald did not know one another before the assassination. Ruby shot Oswald to death two days after the president's assassination while Oswald was in police custody.

THE EVIDENCE about the bullets is said to be from the head nurse at Parkland Hospital. She was quoted as saying four or five bullet fragments were removed from former Texas Gov. John B. Connally and, if that is true, the three-bullet theory of the FBI and the Warren Commission would no longer be valid.

It would mean that at least four bullets were fired and at least one of these would have had to have been fired from some other vantage point at the Kennedy motorcade.

The woman who worked in the nightclub is said to contend that she was with Ruby and Oswald two weeks before the 1963 murder. Tannenbaum, according to AP, said the same woman is prepared to testify that she was taking pictures at Dealey Plaza when Kennedy was killed and that her film was taken from her two days later by men identifying themselves as being from the CIA and FBI.

ARTICLE APPEARED ON PAGE 2.

NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
31 MARCH 1977

Hint Dead JFK Witness Was in CIA

Palm Beach, Fla. (Combined Dispatches) — A man who apparently committed suicide when he learned that his testimony was wanted concerning President Kennedy's assassination was once a CIA operative and claimed to be a confidant of Lee Harvey Oswald, sources said yesterday.

The body of the man, George de Mohrenschildt, 65, a Russian-born French teacher, was found Tuesday afternoof in a study at the waterfront mansion of Mrs. Charles Tilton 3d. He had been a guest of Mrs. Tilton, as was his 33-year-old daughter, who found the body after returning from a shopping trip.

De Mohrenschildt apparently committed suicide, using a shotgun, after learning that Gaeton Fonzi, an investigator for the House Assassinations Committee, was seeking him to testify before the panel about his connections with Oswald, who was Kennedy's sole assassin, according to Warren Commission findings.

A source who had investigatee the assassination of Kennedy for three years, told United Press International that de Mohrenschildt had served as a CIA agent in Haiti in 1963, the year of Kennedy's death.

De Mohrenschildt, who held degrees in international commerce, petroleum geology and engineering, had denied in lengthy testimony before the Warren Commission that he had ever been an agent of any government. He had said that his wide travels on several continents were strictly related to private business. However, the Warren Commission also took off the record testimony from de Mohrenschildt that has never been made public.

The Palm Beach County sheriff's office withheld an official ruling on de Mohrenschildt's death, pending results of an autopsy. But Lt. Richard Sheets said there was "no reason to suspect anything other than suicide."

In Washington, Rep. Richardson Preyer (D-N.C.), a committee member who was headed the Kennedy assassination inquiry, said yesterday that de Mohrenschildt, a professor of French at Bishop College in Dallas, was considered "a crucial witness" in the committee's investigation. Preyer told reporters that the committee would make an effort to subpena any papers in de Mohrenschildt's Beach mansion where he died.

But a few hours ater Preyer's statement, Rep. Eldon Rudd (R-Ariz.), in a House speech, attacked de Mohrenschildt's credibility, noting that the Russian emigre had spent almost two months in the psychiatric wing of Parkland Memorial Hospital in Dallas last winter, and had talked about his involvement with Oswald, to a Dutch reporter after leaving the hospital.

Preyer, a former judge, said that he was aware of de Mohrenschildts 'history of mental illness, but that nevertheless the professor had made some direct contact with Oswald before the assassination. The committee learned of de Mohrenschildts' supposedly new information after a story appeared recently in the Dallas Morning News.

In 964, the Warren Commission investigated de Mohrenschildt, a supposed descendant of Russian nobility, because he had known Oswald in Dallas. But the commission concluded that de Mohrenschildt had known nothing about the No v. 2, 29163, lay iing of Kennedy.

However, de Mohrenschildt told the Butch reporter recently that he might have been "responsible" for Oswald's behavior before the assassination. De Mohrenschildt said that he had had advance knowledge of the murder but gave no specifics.

The Warren Commission said that de Mohrenschildt had left the Soviet Union in 19, later receiving a degree from the University of Texas in petroleum geology.